Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 1, line 4 with the following rewritten paragraph:

-- This application is the National Stage of International Application No. PCT/US99/13592, filed June 16, 1999, which is a Continuation in Part of United States patent application Serial No. 08/949,842, filed October 14, 1997, United States Patent No. 5,941,558, which is a Continuation in Part of United States patent application Serial No. 08/871,243, filed June 9, 1997, now abandoned. This application also claims priority of U. S. provisional application Serial No. 60/089,836 filed June 19, 1998 and Serial No. 60/089,863 filed June 19, 1998. --

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 7, line 24 with the following rewritten paragraph:

-- Figure 17 is a partial cross-sectional view of the passive restraint system of Figures 9-11 including an alternative tether attachment construction~~.~~; --

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 9, line 3 and ending at page 9 line 4 with the following rewritten paragraph.

-- Figure 35 is a die view of the tear seam pattern of the integral air bag door of Figure 25~~:~~;. --

Please insert the text of the detailed description beginning on page 23 at line 25 through page 26 line 5 as shown below, at page 36, line 17:

--An inflatable restraint assembly for passengers in automotive vehicles having a reaction plate constructed of injection-molded plastic according to the present invention is generally indicated at 410 in Figure 31. The reaction plate is generally indicated at 411 in Figures 31 and 32. An inflatable restraint assembly having an alternative reaction plate attachment means constructed according to the invention is generally indicated at 410' in Figure 33. The reaction plate is generally indicated at 411' in Figures 33 and 34. Reference numerals annotated with a prime symbol (') in Figures 33 and 34 indicate alternative configurations of elements that also appear in the embodiment of Figures 31 and 32. Where a portion of the description uses a reference numeral to refer to the figures, we intend that portion of the description to apply equally to elements designated by primed numerals in Figures 33 and 34.

The assembly 410 includes a support structure generally indicated at 412 in Figures 31 and 32. The support structure 412 includes an interior vehicle panel or retainer panel shown at 414 in Figure 31, and an air bag deployment door shown at 416 in Figure 31. The air bag deployment door 416 is integrally formed in the retainer panel 414 and includes a perimeter 418, at least a portion of which is defined by a frangible marginal edge or tear seam 420. The support structure 412 also includes an air bag dispenser shown at 422 in Figure 31. The air bag dispenser 422 is supported adjacent a door inner surface 424 opposite a door outer surface 426. An air bag (not shown) is supported in an air bag receptacle or canister 428 of the air bag dispenser 422. The air bag has an inner end operatively connected to the air bag dispenser 422 and an outer end disposed adjacent the air bag deployment door 416. The air bag dispenser 422 is configured to direct air bag deployment along a deployment path through the retainer panel 414.

The reaction plate 411 is disposed between the air bag and the air bag deployment door 416 and is configured to receive the force of air bag deployment from the air bag dispenser 422

and to direct and distribute that force against the door inner surface 424 to at least partially separate the door 416 from the vehicle panel 414 along the frangible marginal edge 420 of the door 416. The reaction plate 411 has an integral tether 430 connected between the support structure 412 and an outwardly pivotable panel portion 435 of the reaction plate 411. The tether 430 is configured to bend under the force of air bag inflation allowing the pivotable panel portion 435 to pivot into a position angularly spaced from the air bag deployment path. The pivotable panel portion 435 of the reaction plate 411 is configured to close a canister opening 434 of the air bag canister 422. The reaction plate 411 comprises a plastics material.

The reaction plate 411 may be molded from a thermoplastic elastomer (TPE) to enable the reaction plate 411 to meet cold performance requirements. The use of TPE allows the reaction plate 411 to meet these standards because TPE's are generally more ductile at low temperatures or have lower glass transition temperatures (T_g) than the plastics used for the retainer panel 414. However, in other embodiments the reaction plate 411 may be made of any one of a number of other suitable thermoplastic or thermoset plastics known in the art.

The integral tether or hinge 430 is connected to the support structure 412 by a sliding hinge 436. The sliding hinge 436 is configured to allow the reaction plate 411 to slide outwardly (rearwardly in the case of a dash-mounted assembly) when a deploying air bag forces the reaction plate 411 to pivot outward. Because it allows the reaction plate 411 to move outward as it pivots upward the sliding hinge 436 moves the reaction plate 411 into a position where it will not bind mechanically against a portion of the vehicle panel 438 that is disposed directly above and in the path of the opening reaction plate 411.

The integral tether 430 is connected to the support structure 412 by two fasteners 440. The sliding hinge 436 includes two slotted fastener holes 442 in the integral hinge 430 to receive

the fasteners. The slotted fastener holes 442 are configured to slidably receive the shaft portions of each fastener 440. When a deploying air bag impacts a back surface 446 of the reaction plate 411 and begins pushing the reaction plate 411 and door 416 outward, the slotted fastener holes 442 allow the integral tether 430 to slide outwardly relative to the fasteners 440.

The pivotable panel portion 435 of the reaction plate 411 includes integral ribs shown at 448 in Figures 31 and 32. The integral ribs 448 are configured to stiffen the reaction plate 411 against deformation caused by uneven impact forces from a deploying air bag. The integral ribs 448 extend integrally inward from an inner surface 446 of the pivotable panel portion 435 of the reaction plate 411. As is best shown in Figure 32, the integral ribs 448 include vertical and horizontal intersecting ribs in a rectangular matrix or egg crate pattern.

According to the embodiment of Figures 33 and 34, the integral tether 430' includes fanfolds 452 configured to allow the tether 430" to elongate when a deploying air bag forces the reaction plate 411' outward (again, rearward in the case of a dash-mounted assembly). The fanfolds 452 may be integrated into the molding of the reaction plate 411' thus eliminating the mechanical bind described above with regard to the embodiment of Figures 31 and 32, without having to form and assemble a sliding mechanism such as that shown in the embodiment of Figures 31 and 32. In other embodiments, the tether 430 may include an accordion or bellows-type configuration rather than the fanfolds 452 described above.--

Please delete the text of the detailed description beginning at page 23, line 25 through page 26, line 5 as shown below:

~~An inflatable restraint assembly for passengers in automotive vehicles having a reaction plate constructed of injection-molded plastic according to the present invention is generally~~

~~indicated at 410 in Figure 31. The reaction plate is generally indicated at 411 in Figures 31 and 32. An inflatable restraint assembly having an alternative reaction plate attachment means constructed according to the invention is generally indicated at 410' in Figure 33. The reaction plate is generally indicated at 411' in Figures 33 and 34. Reference numerals annotated with a prime symbol (') in Figures 33 and 34 indicate alternative configurations of elements that also appear in the embodiment of Figures 31 and 32. Where a portion of the description uses a reference numeral to refer to the figures, we intend that portion of the description to apply equally to elements designated by primed numerals in Figures 33 and 34.~~

~~The assembly 410 includes a support structure generally indicated at 412 in Figures 31 and 32. The support structure 412 includes an interior vehicle panel or retainer panel shown at 414 in Figure 31, and an air bag deployment door shown at 416 in Figure 31. The air bag deployment door 416 is integrally formed in the retainer panel 414 and includes a perimeter 418, at least a portion of which is defined by a frangible marginal edge or tear seam 420. The support structure 412 also includes an air bag dispenser shown at 422 in Figure 31. The air bag dispenser 422 is supported adjacent a door inner surface 424 opposite a door outer surface 426. An air bag (not shown) is supported in an air bag receptacle or canister 428 of the air bag dispenser 422. The air bag has an inner end operatively connected to the air bag dispenser 422 and an outer end disposed adjacent the air bag deployment door 416. The air bag dispenser 422 is configured to direct air bag deployment along a deployment path through the retainer panel 414.~~

~~The reaction plate 411 is disposed between the air bag and the air bag deployment door 416 and is configured to receive the force of air bag deployment from the air bag dispenser 422 and to direct and distribute that force against the door inner surface 424 to at least partially separate the door 416 from the vehicle panel 414 along the frangible marginal edge 420 of the~~

~~door 416. The reaction plate 411 has an integral tether 430 connected between the support structure 412 and an outwardly pivotable panel portion 435 of the reaction plate 411. The tether 430 is configured to bend under the force of air bag inflation allowing the pivotable panel portion 435 to pivot into a position angularly spaced from the air bag deployment path. The pivotable panel portion 435 of the reaction plate 411 is configured to close a canister opening 434 of the air bag canister 422. The reaction plate 411 comprises a plastics material.~~

~~The reaction plate 411 may be molded from a thermoplastic elastomer (TPE) to enable the reaction plate 411 to meet cold performance requirements. The use of TPE allows the reaction plate 411 to meet these standards because TPE's are generally more ductile at low temperatures or have lower glass transition temperatures (T_g) than the plastics used for the retainer panel 414. However, in other embodiments the reaction plate 411 may be made of any one of a number of other suitable thermoplastic or thermoset plastics known in the art.~~

~~The integral tether or hinge 430 is connected to the support structure 412 by a sliding hinge 436. The sliding hinge 436 is configured to allow the reaction plate 411 to slide outwardly (rearwardly in the case of a dash-mounted assembly) when a deploying air bag forces the reaction plate 411 to pivot outward. Because it allows the reaction plate 411 to move outward as it pivots upward the sliding hinge 436 moves the reaction plate 411 into a position where it will not bind mechanically against a portion of the vehicle panel 438 that is disposed directly above and in the path of the opening reaction plate 411.~~

~~The integral tether 430 is connected to the support structure 412 by two fasteners 440. The sliding hinge 436 includes two slotted fastener holes 442 in the integral hinge 430 to receive the fasteners. The slotted fastener holes 442 are configured to slidably receive the shaft portions of each fastener 440. When a deploying air bag impacts a back surface 446 of the reaction plate~~

~~411 and begins pushing the reaction plate 411 and door 416 outward, the slotted fastener holes 442 allow the integral tether 430 to slide outwardly relative to the fasteners 440.~~

~~The pivotable panel portion 435 of the reaction plate 411 includes integral ribs shown at 448 in Figures 31 and 32. The integral ribs 448 are configured to stiffen the reaction plate 411 against deformation caused by uneven impact forces from a deploying air bag. The integral ribs 448 extend integrally inward from an inner surface 446 of the pivotable panel portion 435 of the reaction plate 411. As is best shown in Figure 32, the integral ribs 448 include vertical and horizontal intersecting ribs in a rectangular matrix or egg crate pattern.~~

~~According to the embodiment of Figures 33 and 34, the integral tether 430' includes fanfolds 452 configured to allow the tether 430" to elongate when a deploying air bag forces the reaction plate 411' outward (again, rearward in the case of a dash-mounted assembly). The fanfolds 452 may be integrated into the molding of the reaction plate 411' thus eliminating the mechanical bind described above with regard to the embodiment of Figures 31 and 32, without having to form and assemble a sliding mechanism such as that shown in the embodiment of Figures 31 and 32. In other embodiments, the tether 430 may include an accordion or bellows-type configuration rather than the fanfolds 452 described above.~~